

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0448

A. JUSTIFICATION

This request is for extension of a current information collection.

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The [Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000](#) (Act) (P.L. 106-562; 16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) was passed to provide a framework for conserving coral reefs. Program implementation guidelines were published in the [Federal Register](#) on April 19, 2002 ([67 FR 19396](#)) and updated on August 12, 2010 ([75 FR 48934](#)). The Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, under the Act, provides funds to a broad-based group of applicants with experience in coral reef conservation to conduct activities to protect and conserve coral reef ecosystems.

This collection contains: 1) an applicant's request for a waiver of matching funds and 2) comments from authorities with jurisdiction over the areas of proposed projects.

Requests for a Waiver of Matching Funds

This provision requires applicants that are requesting a waiver of the matching funds requirement in 16 U.S.C. 6403 (b) to provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, an explanation of how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing a match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the recipient from securing non-Federal matching funds for a proposed project.

Comments from Authorities with Jurisdiction over the Area of Proposed Projects

This provision requests comments on proposed projects from authorities with jurisdiction over the area where the project will be carried out. Specifically, agencies will be requested to comment on: the extent to which the project is consistent with locally-established coral reef conservation priorities and projects; whether the project has been coordinated with existing or planned projects; suggestions for improving project coordination and/or technical approach; whether the applicant will need to obtain a permit or other authorization from the agency for the project; and appropriate staff points of contact.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

Requests for a Waiver of Matching Funds

The Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program publishes a Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) announcement on the grants.gov website for each of the competitions that are active during the fiscal year. Information describing the eligibility requirements and process for applying for a waiver of matching funds is provided in each of the relevant FFO announcements for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, under CFDA number 11.482. The FFOs can be obtained at <http://www.grants.gov>. Applicants are required to submit grant proposals electronically through www.grants.gov or by mail. Only applicants who cannot provide sufficient matching funds are required to submit the waiver request as part of the grant application. Program staff reviews the match waiver request to determine if a waiver of matching funds is justified and then make a recommendation to the program manager, who has the authority to grant a waiver. Governments of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands may invoke the waiver exemption granted to insular areas at [48 U.S.C. 1469a\(d\)](#) for projects of \$200,000 or less.

Comments from Authorities with Jurisdiction over the Area of Proposed Projects

Proposals received in response to the FFO announcements will be faxed or mailed to agencies or authorities with jurisdiction over the area where the project will be carried out. These entities will have the opportunity to comment on each proposal. Comments will be used to determine the extent to which the project is consistent with locally-established coral reef conservation priorities and projects; whether the project has been coordinated with existing or planned projects; suggestions for improving project coordination and/or technical approach; whether the applicant will need to obtain a permit or other authorization from the agency for the project; and appropriate staff points of contact for follow up. Comments provided by these authorities will be factored into the proposal evaluation and selection process.

NOAA National Ocean Service will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to [Section 515 of Public Law 106-554](#).

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

Applicants and reviewers will be encouraged to submit their information electronically. Match waiver requests will be submitted as part of an electronic application package submitted via www.grants.gov or as part of a paper application submitted by U.S. mail.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

The information is collected on a specific proposal-by-proposal basis and is not otherwise available. We have not identified any duplication.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

Small businesses and entities are not expected to be involved.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

If the information collection were not conducted or conducted less frequently, the reviewing agency personnel would: 1) have a difficult time assessing whether the applicants' projects outweigh the public interest in requiring a match, and 2) be unable to determine a project's consistency with local conservation priorities.

The Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 mandates both of these requirements, and if the program were not able to collect this information, NOAA would be unable to appropriately carry out its mandate.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

There are no special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

8. Provide information on the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

A Federal Register Notice published on Tuesday, December 9, 2014 (79 FR 73045) solicited public comments. No comments were received.

Comments were solicited at a grantees' meeting during the week of February 16th, 2015. Three state/territorial grantees stated that response time for collection of information related to obtaining a match waiver was acceptable and did not present an unreasonable burden.

A fourth commenter responded that she agreed: that the proposed collection of information will have practical utility and that the estimated burden and cost "are fine". She also suggested that a way to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected would be to share the information on the Internet, and that a way to minimize burden would be to use internet surveys such as Survey Monkey, which would also provide the program with tabulated results.

Response: With regard to use of the internet, respondents already do submit this information to NOAA via the Internet on Grants.gov. We also make the amount of the match waiver given to each State or Territory available on our website each year after awards are formally offered by the NOAA Grants Officer and accepted by the recipient: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>.

With respect to the suggestion to use internet surveys to tabulate results from applicants: we keep track of the amounts of match waivers provided to recipients of all types. Given that this collection only affects a handful of recipients each year, the situation is not so complex as to require tabulated results.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payments or gifts to respondents are provided.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No assurance of confidentiality is provided to respondents. The only confidentiality/anonymity referenced in the program implementation guidelines is that provided for the identities of peer reviewers.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

No sensitive questions are asked.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

The annual burden for the respondents is **70 hours**.

Match Waiver Request:

18 respondents x 2 hours per request x 1 response = 36 hours (the 2012 submission gave an erroneous response time of 30 minutes).

Proposal Comments:

17 respondents x 2 hours per request x 1 response = 34 hours (previously 1.5 hours per request).

Annual Responses: 35.

Annual Burden Hours: 70.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).

The annual estimated recipient cost burden from this collection is estimated to be no more than \$35.00 per year to cover costs needed to mail or fax comments. All other comments are submitted electronically.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The annualized cost burden to the Federal government to respond by mail or fax to those submissions not sent electronically for this collection is estimated to be no more than \$35.00 per year. All government responses to review submissions submitted electronically are likewise sent electronically.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

Numbers of waiver requestors and proposal commenters increased slightly. Fewer comments in total are now expected, the major reason being a recent change in the maritime boundary in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Previously, CNMI did not claim a territorial sea, so Federal waters extended to the shoreline. Now that CNMI has claimed authority over their 3-mile territorial sea, we no longer have to seek input from Federal authorities (namely the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council) on every application proposing work in coastal CNMI.

The reduction in estimated costs stems from increased use of electronic submission practices and changes in jurisdictional boundaries.

The change from 30 minutes to 2 hours for waiver requests is a correction, as is the change from 1.5 hours to 2 hours for comments.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

This collection will not be published.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

This collection does not seek approval to not display the expiration date.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

This collection does not employ statistical methods.